

SOCIETY ACTS — VERSION 2. MODERNA EXHIBITION 2014

In collaboration with Moderna Museet Malmö, Sweden

Curator: Andreas Nilsson

Co-curator: Maija Rudovska

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kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga

March 7—April 19, 2015

Just as interactions in society are based on a mix of historical experiences and current demands, the artists in the exhibition Society Acts move between perceived experiences and dreamed aspirations. The exhibition's title — Society Acts — is to be understood as a comprehensive and transparent concept, where acts refers to a visible and invisible movement, social action and to performative gesture. Questions of private and collective identities, political expressions, and personal reflections take shape in the exhibition. The artists question and challenge the public realm, the institutional spaces, and the boundary between fiction and documentary.

An extended version of the exhibition Society Acts was first presented last year at Moderna Museet Malmö in the exhibition series The Moderna Exhibition, which historically has been Moderna Museet's inventory of Swedish contemporary art, taking place every fourth year. Unlike the two previous exhibitions, the selection for Society Acts was widened geographically beyond Sweden, to include artists from a large part of the Baltic region, and also included historical elements, some of which were from the collection of Moderna Museet. The exhibition in Malmö presented 38 artists and artist collectives from seven countries.

Moderna Museet has one of the world's finest collections of 20th and 21st century art. The photography collection goes back as far as 1840. Moderna Museet is commissioned to collect, preserve, exhibit and organize learning activities relating to all forms of 20th and 21st century art. Moderna Museet Malmö was inaugurated in 2009, as a branch of Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

Society Acts — Version 2. After Moderna Exhibition 2014 participants: AaBbPp, Cezary Bodzianowski, Eglė Budvytytė & Bart Groenendaal, Zenta Dzividzinska, Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, Joachim Hamou, Laura Kaminskaitė, Essi Kausalainen, Anna Lundh, Henning Lundkvist, Maija Luutonen, Miks Mitrēvics & Kristīne Kursiša, Michala Paludan, Lea Porsager, Emily Roysdon, Imri Sandström, Janek Simon, Ola Ståhl & Terje Östling.

Screening program: Emanuel Almborg, Maja Borg, Maj Hasager, Jonas Mekas, Kristina Norman.

The political activation of a public space, and the sphere between past and present, is made visible in **Anna Lundh's** work *Front-Time Reworkings #2* (2012—2014), a two-channel video installation in which footage from the 1968 demonstrations in New York (against the ongoing Vietnam War, among other things) is displayed alongside newly filmed material from the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in New York in 2011. Lundh poses questions about seeing and the choice of what to document, and in the presented work different aspects of time are cross contaminated. Another documentation of a street demonstration can be found in **Michala Paludan's** installation *The Mighty Indignation* (2014) in which the artist joins in on a May Day demonstration in Copenhagen. The images are accompanied by a commentary made up of quotations of the revolutionary socialist Marie Nielsen (1875—1951), but also by a number of staged photographs representing hands at work. The work refers both to the artist's interests in political protest as a form of expression and in the women's rights movement, but it also makes reference to the format in which museums and institutions present their material. **Emily Roysdon's** work is based even more concretely on the museum as an institution and exponent for political action. In her performance *I am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen* (2012), first performed at the Tate Modern in London, she also explores the relationship between stage set and audience perspective. The approximately one hundred participants in Roysdon's performance identified themselves as feminists and/or queer. Within the already well-defined and delimited space of the gallery, they recreate the room and occupy it by the help of choreography, language, and ropes for marking boundaries. And through the video documentation, the established roles for observer and actor are dissolved.

Standards, rules and regulations have been the subject of interest in **Maija Luutonen's** practice. International Paper (2013), acrylic paintings that are folded to A4 size and sent to the institution where they are unfolded and hung on the walls, refers to postal standards in the United States where A4 is regarded as the international standard. Luutonen comments on institutional regulations and codes of practice as well as grey areas in artistic production, which hover between adhering to the rules and breaking them. Several of **Laura Kaminskaite's** works also treat the phenomenon of the exhibition, as does her textual piece *Walking in a Title* (2012). The exhibition, with its complex relationships between ideas, space, objects and humans are deconstructed. What happens when the given logic is turned upside down, and components exchange places? With ostensibly minimalistic and deceptively humble means, Kaminskaite maps out how ideas and experiences are combined into abstract forms. At the same time, she sheds light on the role of the viewer as co-creator of the work and on the authority of stories, often using the attributes of the text as a point of departure.

Another example of taking over the physical space of the gallery and its surroundings is **Lea Porsager's** installation *Golden Insider — 81 Inflated Facets* (2014) which includes a group of small sculptures spread throughout the institution in a network like the slime molds they reference. Karen Barad, who inspired Porsager, expressed her amazement over these organisms in an interview: "Social amoebas queer the nature of identity, calling into question the individual/group binary." Porsager's practice often blends facts and impressions from incompatible sources (such as natural science, philosophy, and spiritualism) to produce minimalistic sculpture groups accompanied by video and text.

In the exhibition, **Essi Kausalainen's** work, which often involves performance, is represented by three videos and a performance. They all depict an almost empty space inhabited by at most a small group of people, plants, and furnishings. Kausalainen is interested in how the interaction between the bodies creates social assemblages, and the movements in her performances and videos transform into ceremonial gestures—minimalistic choreographies of repetition. By letting repetition as well as variation and surprise make up her work, Kausalainen points out the complexity and possibility of dialogue and interaction between different species and matter. **Zenta Dzividzinska's** photos, from the series *Rīgas Pantomīma* (ca. 1964—1967), depict the Riga Pantomime group's rehearsals as well as their backstage life. She points to the importance of the performance not only at times when the freedom of expression was limited due to the censorship of the Soviet cultural policy but also in general — that performance art remains to this day a powerful and effective form of expression for challenging fixed and isolated classes of concepts.

Several works in the exhibition discuss the role of the city, the spatial and social relationship, as well as settings and the conditions of behaviour, that have been framed by particular institutions and spaces. **Cezary Bodzianowski** has a modest, subtle way of using open urban space as a stage. Using discreet actions and interactions, the artist explores social behaviour and attitudes in everyday life. Bodzianowski often stages his events in a public space in the city for an unsuspecting audience, while documenting them in film and photography. With the use of modest measures and a bit of humour he unsettles everyday behaviour and gets us, at least for a moment, to believe in an alternative and see the world around us with new eyes. A more concrete political view on the urban landscape is found in *23,500T* (2012). In the artists' book, **Ola Ståhl** and **Terje Östling** examine the brutalist Park Hill public housing development in Sheffield, which has figured in many political and economic discussions since its construction in 1957—1961. The artists have created a book in which the building serves as a symbol for economic stagnation, urban development, and gentrification that is applicable to many neighbourhoods and cities today. **Eglė Budvytytė** and **Bart Groenendaal** offer a more surrealist perspective on the city of the future in their film *In the Absence of Miracles: The Twilight and the Loop* (2014). The two artists play on the confrontation between a cornerstone family and the urban environment they drive through, populated by ambiguous characters, in a tongue-in-cheek version of a classical road movie. The film is as much a comment on cinema as it pokes fun at some of the ideological backdrops of history.

From a political perspective the artists Johanna Gustafsson Fürst and Joachim Hamou discuss the concepts of borders and territories. **Johanna Gustafsson Fürst** explores the relationship between public, common and private. The series of sculptures *Public Green* (2013/2014) is an investigation into the relationship between a society and an individual. It

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3.00 EUR

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addresses the politics of everyday — our choices and responsibilities as consumers, but also as citizens. **Joachim Hamou's** work UIP27 was staged as a theatrical situation in Malmö — a round table debate for an audience to follow — where the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was discussed from different points of views. In the exhibition at kim? Contemporary Art Centre, a filmed excerpt from the theatrical situation is presented. Discussing the national identity, language, and the politics of cultural propaganda is also of **Janek Simon's** interest. He is a sociologist, a radical tourist, and an artist traveller who uses his journeys as a tool to test the durability of such topics. This strategy manifests itself in a particularly refined way in his project Ashes and Diamonds (2014), which aims to remake Andrzej Wajda's 1958 cult film of the same title. Simon's version of Ashes and Diamonds is made in Nigeria — in Nollywood, as the Nigerian movie industry is known. In his film, Simon looks for historical analogies between communist Poland and the political situation in Nigeria.

In both Imri Sandström's and Henning Lundkvist's practice we find an interest in the inherent meaning of language in the form of symbols and double meanings, but also an interest in territories, migration, and the drawing of borders. **Imri Sandström** researches the poet Susan Howe's use of language and her relationship to New England in the United States, and juxtaposes it with her own home region of Västerbotten in northern Sweden. From that research emerges a work woven from linguistic sounds that cross borders, historical tales of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pioneers, and the relationship between the centre of power and its periphery. That same relationship is also examined in Henning Lundkvist's SPQR(M) (2013), a commentary on the movement of economic capital using Burma as an example. Lundkvist uses a language derived from popular culture and global corporations, and demonstrates how capital and the meaning of symbols are transferred with increasing speed. Consumerism, goods and branding are also addressed in **AaBbPp's** work, a brand created for the exhibition's occasion by artists Gintaras Didžiapetris and Elena Narbutaitė. In Malmö, reflecting on and imitating the corporative formations, the artists presented three hoods, which take their shapes and forms from different ages and cultures. Styling the hoods triggers reflection upon notions of hiding, protecting and camouflaging which characterize branding strategies. The artist duo **Miks Mitrēvics** and **Kristīne Kursiša** in their on-going project Let me Google that for You, present data that they have been collecting during their "internal" and "external" journeys: photographs, notes, everyday objects, quotations, screen downloads and random encounters form a resource full of associations and links so typical to the post-digital age. Framed by Google, information "packaging" is at the core of the work of Mitrēvics and Kursiša which is not only a perfect space for their personal archive and subjective encounters but also for the constructions of collectively consumed stories and narratives.

The exhibition at Moderna Museet Malmö was generously supported by: Region Skåne, Polish Institute, Danish Arts Foundation, Latvian Culture Capital Fund, The International Cultural Programme Centre, The Ministry of Culture of Republic of Lithuania & Lithuanian Council for Culture, Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Letterstedtska Föreningen

The exhibition at kim? Contemporary Art Centre is supported by: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, Embassy of Sweden in Riga, Danish Arts Foundation, State Culture Capital Foundation, Riga City Council, Iaspis, Vivacolor, Rīgas Laiks, kultura.lv, Absolut, VKN, Valmiermuižas alus, Rīga TV24, Pieci.lv, Delfi.

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